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ABSTRACT

This publication, one of a series of self-contained instructional materials for students in marketing and distribution, deals with home furnishings marketing. Addressed in the individual units of the guide are the following topics: the field of home furnishings merchandising, beginning duties and responsibilities, competencies needed by individuals merchandising home furnishings, organization of learning experiences to master merchandising skills, evaluation and improvement of merchandising skills, career qualifications and opportunities, and competencies and opportunities for successful entrepreneurs. Each unit contains some or all of the following: unit objectives, instructional text, notes, questions, and suggested projects. Answers to the questions can be found in the appended "Home Furnishings Marketing Answer Book." (MN)

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A Guide for
Home Furnishings Marketing
(Softlines)

By

Jo Ann Reeves

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Contents

Foreword / page v

Preface / page vi

Acknowledgments / page vii

Assignment 1: **What is Home Furnishings Merchandising? / page 1**
Terms defined; description of different types of shops, stores, departments; examples of merchandise.

Assignment 2: **Beginning Duties and Responsibilities / page 5**
Qualities appreciated in a salesperson by customers; importance of customer; beginning duties; types of shoplifters.

Assignment 3: **What Do I Need to Know? / page 9**
Competencies explained; uses of a competency list; identified competencies needed.

Assignment 4: **How Can Competencies Be Acquired? / page 13**
Sources for competencies; instructional materials; importance of daily job experiences.

Assignment 5: **How Can I Organize My Learning Experiences? / page 17**
Development and use of competency categories; basic and general skills; application of skills; sources of product information; use of product information.

Assignment 6: **How Can I Evaluate and Improve? / page 21**
Types of performance evaluation; use of self-evaluations; using evaluations to improve.

Assignment 7: **Career Qualifications, Plans, and Opportunities / page 25**
Qualifications for home furnishings marketing; importance of school records; points for a successful career; positions available in the field; ways to learn of job openings.

Assignment 8: **Do You Want to Be an Entrepreneur? / page 29**
Competencies for a successful entrepreneur; types of business loans; factors for locating a store; importance of attracting and holding customers.

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TITLE VII, CIVIL RIGHTS ACT OF 1964; EXECUTIVE ORDERS 11246 and 11375; TITLE IX 1973 EDUCATION AMENDMENTS; REHABILITATION ACT OF 1973 AS AMENDED; 1974 AMENDMENTS TO THE WAGE-HOUR LAW EXPANDING THE AGE DISCRIMINATION IN EMPLOYMENT ACT OF 1967; VIETNAM ERA VETERANS READJUSTMENT ASSISTANCE ACT OF 1972 AS AMENDED IN 1974.

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Foreword

This publication is one of a series of self-contained instructional materials for students in marketing and distribution. Although the material is designed for individualized study, it should be used under the supervision of an instructor. For that reason, two publications are offered, the student's manual and an answer book.

The student's manual is for the use of persons in training. Each assignment includes competencies, appropriate information, objectives to be met, and questions and projects that help in meeting those objectives. The answer book provides competencies as well, and the answers to the questions.

Every effort has been made to produce a publication that addresses the unique needs of our current student population. Students with limited English proficiency (LEP) as well as handicapped, educationally disadvantaged, and nontraditional students may require modification of the material in this publication. The professional staff of EIMC will gladly work with any instructor having these students to show how the instructional material can be adapted for specific individualized instruction. Consult local, state, and federal agencies that offer assistance and guidance and that can provide sound recommendations for productive classroom management.

Kathryn R. Allen, Ph.D.
Acting Director, Extension Instruction
and Materials Center

Preface

This is one of a series of marketing publications with a new format. It is not intended to provide comprehensive information on the marketing of softline home furnishings, but to serve as a **guide** for the student who is entering this occupational area. Using this guide, the student will be able to develop an in-depth plan for making a successful career in this area.

The area of softline home furnishings marketing is so diverse that it would not be possible to cover all of the product information. Sources are given for the student so that he or she may develop the necessary knowledge in the field.

The instructor will find this guide useful in preparing training plans, individualized instruction, and a teaching outline for specialized instruction.

Acknowledgments

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Foley's, Austin, Texas
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Gratitude is also extended to the marketing and distributive education staff of the Texas Education Agency for providing guidance during the development of this publication.

1

What Is Home Furnishings Merchandising?

Objectives: *After completing this assignment, you will be able to—*

1. *define marketing and merchandising;*
2. *describe "home furnishings" and give examples; and*
3. *tell where home furnishings may be sold.*

Part of learning about any career field is learning the vocabulary. You need to use and understand certain words. Some of them may be unique to your chosen area of interest. Others are words that are widely used in any area of marketing. "Marketing" is a good word for a beginning.

In your basic studies, you learned several definitions of marketing. The American Marketing Association definition is "the performance of business activities that direct the flow of goods and services from producer to consumer." This is a very broad and general definition. More precisely, marketing is defined as "a total system of interrelated business activities that plan, price, promote, and distribute goods and services to the final consumer."

The last definition begins to describe some of the main areas of competencies or abilities that will be required if you are to be successful and advance in any marketing occupation. Specific competencies for home furnishings merchandising include general activities (planning, promoting, pricing, distributing), as well as more detailed activities. The competencies you need are listed and described in Assignment 3.

The definitions of "merchandising" continue to add competencies for you to learn. The most widely used definition is one you have heard before in your basic studies. It states that merchandising is a combination of strategies for having the right product or service at the right place, at the right time, in the right quantities or assortments, in the right light, and at the right price. A simpler definition does not include all the skills and abilities you will need, but it has value for your study of home furnishings merchandising. It states that merchandising is showcasing a product or service so that it is always attractive to the prospective buyer. Since so many home furnishings purchases are made for decorative purposes, this definition is certainly appropriate.

Defining "home furnishings" may encompass all items used for the interior of a home. In a broad sense, this would include many different kinds and classes of merchandise that might be sold by different types of retailers. Home furnishings may include household furniture, carpets, draperies and blinds, kitchen appliances, decorative accessories, lamps and shades, beddings and linens. From this large area, we are going to limit home furnishings to the following:

1. Beddings and linens
2. Ready-made drapes and window coverings
3. Miscellaneous accessories

Some retailers may still use the terms "household linens and dry goods" to refer to these categories. To gain a better under-

standing of this narrow definition of "home furnishings," look at a list of items that may be included:

1. Sheets (twin, full, queen or king size, for water beds, for sleeper sofas)
2. Pillow cases
3. Comforters or duvets
4. Bedspreads
5. Dust ruffles
6. Ready-made window treatments (drapes, panels, valances, curtains, blinds, shades)
7. Bath towels and washcloths
8. Tub mats
9. Bath scales
10. Fragranced soaps
11. Pillows, for bed or decorative use
12. Blankets
13. Pillow protectors
14. Pillow shams
15. Mattress pads
16. Wall hangings
17. Kitchen towels, cloths, hot pads, and other items
18. Tablecloths, runners, and mats
19. Napkins
20. Napkin rings
21. Quilt or blanket stands
22. Bed trays
23. Padded clothes hangers
24. Pillow sachets
25. Night lights
26. Bed caddies
27. Lingerie bags
28. Drawer liners
29. Ceramic pomanders
30. Accent lamps
31. Accent items, such as mirrors, scones, shells, baskets
32. Cushion sets for chairs
33. Covers for daybeds
34. Slumber bags
35. Electric blankets and electric mattress pads
36. Shower curtains, rod covers, and hooks
37. Bed and pillow sacks
38. Padded toilet seats
39. Accessory items, such as liquid soap dispensers, rattan stools, toothbrush holders, tissue box covers, wastebaskets, clothes hampers, wall-mount vanities
40. Closet accessories, such as suit bags, shoe racks or chests
41. Doilies
42. Slip covers for chairs and sofas

While the list of examples is long, it does not include every item that might be found in "home furnishings."

Variety is a key word in understanding home furnishings. The variety is shown in the many different items, styles, colors, fabrics, finishes, designs, price lines, and sizes.

To make the examples of home furnishings items more meaningful, stop now and do this project. Make a list of each of the home furnishings examples you have in your home. Add any others you may have. Tell the different sizes, styles, colors, or designs of each item you have. Imagine what your home or your life would be like if the items on your list were not available. All of the items may not be essential. Some may be decorative. Home furnishings may be essential, decorative, or both.

We certainly need a towel to dry our bodies when we step out of a shower. The same necessary towel can add a decorative touch to the bathroom. Look again at your lists. Tell which items are essential, decorative, or both.

Home furnishings may be sold in department stores, discount stores, and specialty shops. Department stores carry many different types of merchandise. The home furnishings are generally found grouped together in one department or in adjoining departments. For instance, one department may feature table linens, another beddings, another bath goods, and still another kitchen goods. Salespeople are available to provide the customer with assistance in making selections. Displays feature current colors, designs, and decorative trends.

Discount stores do not generally use large display space. Most often, the merchandise will be stacked on shelves so that the customer can explore and make selections. Little assistance is provided to the customer other than by the cashier who rings up purchases. Overhead costs are often lower than in other retail businesses, and the savings are then passed on to the customer in lower prices.

Some discount stores may carry either "seconds" or discontinued stock. "Seconds" must be clearly marked so that the customer does not mistake an item for one of first quality. The items may have some slight imperfection or be soiled. These are offered at reduced prices. Discontinued stock includes all or parts of a line or style of

merchandise that a manufacturer is no longer producing. These items may also be lower in price than more current merchandise.

Specialty shops may carry a large variety of home furnishings merchandise or may limit their inventory to only items for one area of the home, such as the bedroom or the bath. Specialty stores often focus their displays on color or a current design of decor. Salespeople are available to provide customer assistance.

The shops and stores that sell home furnishings may be quite different in many ways—location, size, ownership, available services, hours of operations. Just as there is a wide variety in what we call "home furnishings," there is a wide variety in the sales facilities.

Regardless of the items or the selling environment, the area of home furnishings merchandising does include common competencies you need to learn. Once you have gained these competencies, you will be able to work successfully in your area, no matter the item or the location.

Questions

1. Give two definitions of **marketing.**
2. What is the most widely used definition of **merchandising?**
3. Give a simpler definition of **merchandising.**
4. What are some of the items that may be included in the broad area of home furnishings?
5. What three categories are used to limit your study of home furnishings in this publication?
6. How is variety shown in home furnishings?
7. Where may home furnishings be sold?
8. How may the shops and stores that sell home furnishings differ from one another?

Projects

1. If you are now employed in home furnishings merchandising, write a description of your shop or store. Be as specific as you can. Include such things as location, lines of merchandise, shop or department arrangement, special items carried, price variations, and hours of operation. Do not limit your description to these things if you can add others.
2. If you are not employed, describe the location where you purchased a home furnishings item recently. Revisit the shop or store, if necessary, to observe it more closely. Give as much detail description as you can.
3. Create a collage (group of pictures) to illustrate the variety of merchandise available at your store.

2

Beginning Duties and Responsibilities

Objectives: *After completing this assignment, you will be able to—*

1. *list five qualities for a salesperson that customers appreciate;*
2. *recognize the importance of the customer;*
3. *describe at least five duties expected of a beginning salesperson; and*
4. *identify three types of shoplifters.*

The stores or shops where home furnishings are sold may differ in many ways—size, location, and lines of merchandise, for example. Stores or shops may employ different numbers of people and may use different job titles. Still, the beginning salesperson will be expected to know and do some common tasks, no matter the store or number of employees.

The salesperson deals with the person most important to any retail operation—the customer. If the customer does not come to the store and buy the merchandise, the store will close. It's that simple! Recognizing the importance of the customer is necessary for any salesperson. Good salespeople cause customers to return to the store. Customers tend to judge an entire store by the attitude displayed by the selling force. So even before you perform any work, your employer expects you to set a positive tone for the entire store.

You set a positive tone by the attitude you communicate to the customer. A customer will often sense your attitude before noticing anything else in the store. How can you communicate a positive attitude? You do this by showing that you have the qualities customers appreciate and recognize easily. These qualities include (1) a neat appearance, (2) courtesy, (3) consideration, (4) interest, and (5) enthusiasm. Once you show a positive attitude, the customer will be more likely to respond to the merchandise and the store.

To gain a better understanding of beginning tasks a salesperson may be given, let's look in on a new employee.

Before being put on the sales floor, Phil was given some training in operating the cash register and in filling out store forms—sales slips, layaway slips, return slips, credit slips, and so on. As he was assigned to the floor, the supervisor told him to spend his spare time getting to know the merchandise in the department. Between customers, Phil straightened the display tables and stock bins, and returned merchandise to racks and shelves. By doing these things, he learned what items were in stock and where to find them. He read labels of merchandise to find out as much as he could about the fabric content, the care required, and the cost of different items.

Phil spent some time just watching other salespeople. One person seemed to be a particular favorite of customers and seemed to sell more than all the other people. Phil noticed that this salesperson met each customer with a warm, friendly smile. She listened very carefully as customers stated their needs, and she did her best to help them find exactly what they wanted. She expressed her opinion when asked and often

suggested other or related items to the customer. When a customer returned some merchandise or had a complaint, she was courteous. Phil made a mental note that courtesy, attentiveness, and helpfulness were good traits for a salesperson.

Phil did write up sales slips. As he completed them, he became more aware of the importance of accuracy. The sales tickets helped the department keep records of what merchandise was selling, as well as of how much money was put in the cash drawer. A mistake in adding tax or in figuring a sale price had to be corrected. Completing the ticket was essential. The department number, Phil's sales number, and the date were all recorded. The special codes to indicate a cash or credit sale had to be used in order for the cash to balance at the end of the day. Phil learned quickly that accuracy and completeness of all records was essential.

The lessons Phil learned during his first few days were not hard, but they were very important to his success. Let's list some of what he learned:

1. How to operate the cash register.
2. How to complete forms accurately.
3. What merchandise was in stock and its location.
4. Where merchandise information was located and how to use it.
5. How to be courteous, helpful, and attentive to customers.

These are the most obvious things he learned. What other lessons do you think he might have learned?

As you remember what Phil learned during his first few days, several tasks will come to mind. He kept the stock straight. He returned stock to the correct location. He did general housekeeping duties, such as emptying a trash can. Certainly, he may have had to count change correctly for a customer. A customer may have presented a check, and he would have had to follow store procedures on accepting a check. A credit purchase would have required a different procedure. These are small, but essential, miscellaneous duties a salesperson is expected to be able to perform.

The size of the store or the number of people employed may influence the kinds of tasks expected of a salesperson. In a small store with few employees, the salesperson may perform some tasks that might be assigned to others in a larger operation. To understand how this might happen, let us trace what happens to merchandise from the time it reaches the retail store until it is bought by a customer.

Merchandise arrives for unloading at the receiving area of the store, which is usually in the back of the store away from the customers. The merchandise shipments coming in must be checked for breakage, damage, shortage, overage, and substitutions. Once the merchandise has been inspected and carefully checked against the bill of lading, it is then ready to be unpacked, priced, and placed in storage or on the selling floor. (The **bill of lading** is a shipping receipt that shows the name and address of the manufacturer shipping the order, the name and address of the store receiving the order, and the number of boxes being delivered.)

An invoice, or itemized list of the items of merchandise, is sent along with the order. The invoice is checked against the merchandise as it is unpacked.

New merchandise is recorded, just as merchandise sold is recorded. This inventory record helps tell the manager or owner how much merchandise is in the store at any given time.

Price tags or tickets are attached to the merchandise before it is placed on display. Pricing may be done with a string tag, a handwritten ticket, a print tag, a button tag, a washable linen label, an electronic bar tag, a gummed label, or an attacher tag. Other types of pricing tickets may be used, but these are the most common.

The tags may contain the following information: retail price, unit price and quantity, cost price in code, season letter or date the goods were received into stock, date on which goods are to be removed from sale, size and color, kind of material, style number, manufacturer or vendor number, department, and classification.

After pricing, the next step is to store the merchandise. Reserve stock is put in a storeroom. Forward stock is placed in the selling area.

In a large department store, the tasks related to receiving and checking merchandise may be done by a stock clerk. However, in small stores or specialty shops, the salesperson may do all or part of the duties of receiving and checking.

Stock clerks usually make certain that forward merchandise does not run low on the

salescounters or displays. Again, in some stores this duty may be given to the salesperson. Customers cannot buy what they cannot see. For this reason, it is important to see that the selling area contains a full variety and stock of merchandise.

At specified times during the year, a physical inventory must be taken. This means counting all of the items in the store. Generally, physical inventories are taken when the store is closed so that customers are not interrupted while shopping. Salespeople may be asked to help with physical inventory also. The number of items on hand is subtracted from the total of the last inventory to determine the amount of stock that has been sold. Buyers find the information from a physical inventory helpful in determining what styles and colors and lines of merchandise sell most often.

In addition to selling merchandise to customers, salespeople may be involved in any or all of the activities described from inspecting a delivery to taking physical inventory.

To sum up, twenty activities that may be expected of a beginning salesperson are these:

1. Arrive at work on time. This is a must. You should be early enough to allow you to be at your work station when scheduled. Just "being in the store" is not enough.
2. Make refunds or adjustments as directed by store policy.
3. Accept and cash checks according to store policy.
4. Don't be hurried when cashiering.
5. Wrap or bag properly to protect merchandise.
6. Do not waste supplies. Supplies wasted mean money wasted.
7. Place all bills in their proper compartment in the cash drawer.
8. Be understanding and attentive when customers complain.
9. Learn about the merchandise in order to present it to the customer with confidence and intelligence.
10. Never "work the stock" (perform stockkeeping duties such as arrange stock, replace selling stock, and so on) when a customer is waiting for assistance.
11. Avoid overselling or being too insistent.
12. Help prevent waste and loss.
13. Never guess or rely on memory for prices.
14. Never leave an open cash drawer unattended.
15. Be alert for shortchange artists and counterfeit money.
16. Arrange for merchandise delivery or other special services.
17. Keep a customer "want list," and pass it on to the buyer.
18. Explain credit plans and terms to customers.
19. Promote advertised merchandise.
20. Open and/or close the cash register.

Employers expect salespeople to help reduce shortages. Shortages run into millions of dollars each year and force retailers to raise the prices of merchandise. Shortages may be the result of clerical errors, such as writing up an incorrect sales ticket, but most shortages come from shoplifting and pilferage. There are three kinds of shoplifters you should watch for. First, professional thieves make a living by stealing. These people know and use every trick available from booster boxes to garments with false pockets. Second, there are people who may see a chance to steal and do so as some kind of thrill. Third, young people may steal to gain admiration of their peers or as the result of a dare. Be certain you know how your employer expects you to deal with a shoplifter and follow the store policy. When in doubt, call your supervisor. You should also learn what security measures and equipment, if any, are used in your store.

If you have any doubts about selling home furnishings or about being able to handle the tasks and responsibility, you might answer the following questions and let your answers guide your decision.

- Can I treat all people with courtesy and patience?
- Can I show a positive attitude?
- Do I care about helping people?
- Am I pleasant to people?
- Do I enjoy making people happy?
- Do I treat others with dignity and respect?
- Can I accept responsibility and fulfill assigned duties?
- Am I willing to learn?
- Am I honest?
- Do I mind hard work and flexible hours?

More than any one single characteristic, retailers seek employees with a **positive attitude.** You can learn the required skills, and you can acquire information about the merchandise and the store operations. There are people and resources to help you grow and develop. However, only **you** can develop and show your positive attitude.

Recently, Mr. Charles Lamphere, president of Joske's (a large department store operation), commented, "What differentiates one store from another is people—their attitudes and interest in customers." What difference will you make to your store?

Questions

1. Why is the customer the most important person to any retail operation?
2. What are five qualities customers appreciate and recognize easily in a salesperson?
3. Describe at least five duties expected of a beginning salesperson.
4. Why is incoming merchandise checked?
5. How may the size of the store affect the tasks expected of a salesperson?
6. What is forward and reserve stock?
7. What is a physical inventory, and why is it important?
8. What are three kinds of shoplifters you should watch out for?
9. What is the single characteristic most important for a salesperson?

Projects

1. Read carefully each of the twenty activities that may be expected of a beginning salesperson in home furnishings. Tell if each one is expected of you where you are employed, and give a reason for each statement as it relates to you. If you are not employed, tell why you would expect to have each assigned to you and why.
2. Investigate the security practices, policies, and equipment used where you work. Explain each, and tell what responsibilities you have for security. If you are not working, tell about security measures used at a store where you shop.

3

What Do I Need to Know?

Objectives: *After completing this assignment, you will be able to—*

1. *explain what is meant by "competencies";*
2. *name four uses for a competency list; and*
3. *identify the instructional areas or categories for competency groupings.*

As you have learned about home furnishings and stores and the tasks and expectations for your field, you have begun to understand some of the many things you need to know. To be successful in any job, you must develop knowledge, skills, abilities, and attitudes. These are called **competencies**, and they are essential to your success—in your marketing and distributive education class and in your career field.

Competencies are not all acquired in the same way. Some knowledge about business policies, for example, can be learned from printed materials. The ability to put these policies into action cannot be learned from books. This is gained from experiences in actual work situations. In the next assignment, how and where competencies can be developed will be discussed.

The competencies for home furnishings merchandising are grouped into categories or instructional areas. As you progress, you will use this list over and over. Some of the uses include:

1. You can use the list as a progress chart. You can check off each competency when you demonstrate proficiency or show in some way you know or can do what the competency states.

2. You can use the list as a planning tool. Look over the competencies you do not have at the present time. Select those you need next and work on them.

3. You can use the list to help gain employment. Take the list with you when you go to apply for a job. Discuss with your prospective employer the different areas and the different specific competencies. Point out the competencies you have mastered. This will help demonstrate your present worth to the business and will indicate your interest in learning more.

4. You can use the list to help gain promotions. When your supervisor is evaluating your work performance, ask if you can submit your list of competencies. The list together with your actual performance could make the difference in your promotion.

You will find many more uses for the competencies as you learn, work, and progress. The categories are given in alphabetical order. Statements with an asterisk are taken from the list of essential elements for marketing and distributive education for Texas. Other statements are taken from the competency list validated by Texas business and industry representatives.

Basic Social Skills

- *Demonstrate an ability to speak and write clearly.
- Listen attentively to directions, assignments, and information from customers, supervisors, and managers.

- Read reports, forms, policies, and product information.
- Perform mathematical computations applicable to home furnishings marketing.
- Demonstrate good work habits such as punctuality, orderliness, and patience.
- *Maintain good health and proper appearance for effective job performance.
- Demonstrate appropriate ethics such as integrity and honesty.
- Maintain a positive attitude toward individual responsibilities and/or department and company operations.
- Accept constructive criticism, and take appropriate corrective actions.
- Serve customers courteously to represent the firm favorably.
- *Understand oneself and others.
- *Exercise self-control.
- *Recognize basic human relationships as they relate to business success.
- *Identify forms of business communication.
- Establish and maintain credibility with customers, co-workers, and managers.
- Understand and apply markup, markdown, and stockturn.
- *Demonstrate ability to complete balance statements, profit and loss calculations, payroll techniques, invoices, tax calculations, credit, and interest.
- *Demonstrate proficiency in cashiering, including balance of cash drawer and close-out of register.
- Read price lists for special items not pre-priced.
- Determine amount of sales tax.
- Make change for customers.

Computer Literacy and Applications

- *Develop computer literacy as applicable to marketing and distribution occupations.
- *Develop an awareness of specific applications of computers in marketing and distribution.
- Interpret computer output, such as print-outs and visual display screens.

Credit

- *Translate credit information to the customer.
- *Secure necessary customer credit information, such as credit references, status of customer's account, and credit limits.
- *Interpret credit policies to customers.
- Open new accounts.
- Process credit purchases such as company accounts, BankAmericard, and MasterCard.
- Accept and process payments on accounts and layaways.
- Demonstrate an understanding of the nature of credit and its influence on the economy, business, and the individual.

Distribution Process and Systems

- *Identify channels of distribution.
- *Select appropriate channels for products and services.
- *Use appropriate terminology.
- *Compute rates and charges.

Economic Concepts/Principles

- *Understand the functions of risk and profit.
- *Understand the elements and advantages of the free enterprise system.
- *Learn the roles of the consumer in marketing.
- *Exhibit the value of improved productivity.
- *Identify types of business ownership.
- Demonstrate an understanding of the relationship of supply and demand and the influence on marketing functions.
- Demonstrate an understanding of the relationships of profit and profit motive to sales volume, price determination, costs (fixed and variable), and break-even points.
- Demonstrate an understanding of the influence of competition on product, price, promotion, and distribution goals.
- Demonstrate an understanding of the effects of recession and/or inflation on production, sales, and employment.
- Demonstrate an understanding of the contributions of the value-added-by-marketing concept to the economy, business, and the individual.

Inventory Control System

- *Demonstrate the card system inventory.
- *Understand the mechanical system of inventory.

- *Demonstrate the operation of an inventory locator system.
- *Introduce and understand the advantages of a computerized inventory control system.
- *Maintain accurate inventory control.
- *Understand the use of forms and records necessary in inventory control.
- Plan for a balanced and complete inventory by considering such factors as customers' needs and wants, competitive conditions in the market area served, current trends in sales, customer buying habits, style trends, tastes, and current lifestyles.
- Determine amount of inventory on hand from inventory records or actual count.
- Analyze inventory records to detect merchandise shortages, overages, damages, and style obsolescence.

Management Principles and Practices

- *Identify the role and functions of management.
- *Investigate a company for job information.
- *Develop a career plan.
- *Practice job-seeking skills.
- Plan goals and objectives for specific jobs.
- Schedule employee working hours.
- Follow appropriate procedures if there are employee or customer accidents.
- Prepare records and reports for home, district, and regional offices.
- Determine and select suppliers for various items by comparing discounts and comparing quality by considering packaging, brand names, value, and most current styles available.
- Establish pricing policies to assure an adequate gross margin by considering such factors as customer demand, needed markup, competitors, price, leader pricing, distressed or damaged merchandise, and seasonal merchandise.
- Determine the timing of price reductions and the percentage of markdown.

Operations

- Make out sales slip and send to appropriate accounting, warehouse, delivery department, or other personnel.
- Determine address and convenient time for delivery of merchandise.
- *Use procedures for reporting and handling damaged merchandise.
- Comply with established procedures for handling shoplifting, fraudulence, and pilferage.
- Follow appropriate procedures if there are employee or customer accidents.
- Process checks received in accordance with firm's policies.
- Make refunds or exchanges on returned merchandise in accordance with company policy.
- Perform necessary banking functions such as depositing funds and signing checks.
- Complete appropriate ordering procedures and forms, and place orders to assure timely delivery.
- Establish a receiving schedule.
- Determine priority for processing merchandise received.
- Complete records such as freight tickets, receiving records, and invoices.
- Check merchandise for completeness of order and for damage.
- Follow through on nondelivered or lost merchandise.
- Follow correct procedures in handling defective and damaged merchandise, incorrect amounts, and merchandise returns.
- Store merchandise in appropriate manner.
- Determine best location for merchandise within the firm considering shelf and floor space, customer flow patterns, and available fixtures.
- Establish a delivery schedule.

Product and Service Merchandising

- Prepare merchandise for display, such as uncrating, unwrapping, assembling, and pricing.
- Keep informed of current merchandise quantities in storage.
- Pack merchandise for delivery.
- Identify leads of possible sales by keeping informed of community affairs, such as moves made within the community, newlyweds, and new residents.
- Represent the business favorably to customers by speaking to customers, showing courtesy, and responding to inquiries in a friendly manner.
- Open sale in appropriate manner.
- Determine habits, preferences, and budget of customer.

- *Determine merchandise which is of interest and best suited to customer.
- Present overall design plan and decor suggestions for customer.
- Show an appropriate variety of styles.
- Inform customers of the various sizes, colors, finishes, styles, and prices available.
- Explain to customers protective measures regarding cleaning and maintenance of home furnishings.
- Inform customers of functional features of merchandise.
- Suggest additional and related or substitute items to customers.
- Inform customer of the merchandise materials and manufacturing process and useful life of merchandise.
- Inform customers of product trends and innovations.
- Explain guarantees and warranties to customers.
- *Provide sources of product information to customers.
- *Inform customers of brand and trade names.
- Respond to customer questions and complaints in a pleasant and effective manner.
- *Inform customers of locations of merchandise.
- *Inform customers of services the firm offers.
- Make out sales slip and send to appropriate accounting, warehouse, or delivery department.
- Present business card to customer for future reference.
- Wrap merchandise.
- Follow up on sales, such as inquiring as to customer's satisfaction with merchandise and service.
- Place special orders for customers.
- *Use appropriate trade terminology.
- *Analyze factors that influence specialized store pricing.
- *Recognize factors such as customer demand, markup, competitor's price, leader pricing, distressed merchandise, and seasonal merchandise.

Promotion

- *Understand that the ultimate goal of advertising is to sell goods and services.
- *Employ seasonal or storewide themes in displays.
- *Use color, harmony, balance, and proportion in display construction.
- *Determine the best location for merchandise.
- *Understand and demonstrate the fundamentals of a good display.
- *Use special displays to move merchandise.
- Determine when to promote products or the image of the firm.
- Determine the amount of merchandise needed to back up promotions.
- Determine whether and when to use special promotions and displays.
- Plan location of displays considering logical groupings of merchandise, maximum customer exposure, present and anticipated sales volume, and firm layout.
- Obtain information and materials for displays from suppliers.
- Post current ads in heavy traffic areas.
- Highlight advertised items on shelves and displays.
- Inform customers of advertised merchandise.

Questions

1. What are "competencies"?
2. What are four uses for a competency list?
3. Name the instructional areas or categories for competency groupings.

4

How Can Competencies Be Acquired?

Objectives: *After completing this assignment, you will be able to—*

1. *give the three primary sources from which competencies may be learned or acquired;*
2. *identify the major types of instructional materials;*
3. *name the people who will be helpful to you in developing competencies for home furnishings marketing; and*
4. *explain the importance of your daily job experiences.*

All the competencies required for success in any field are not learned, acquired, or developed instantly. In fact, competencies are gained throughout a career. As new responsibilities are assigned or as new products appear, new competencies will have to be developed. The entire process of "developing competencies" should be planned. In the next assignment, you will learn more about how to organize a plan to develop different kinds of competencies. In this assignment, you will learn some of the sources from which you may receive help in developing competencies.

Competencies may be learned or acquired from three primary sources: (1) from reading and studying **materials** designed to assist you in your career, (2) from **other people** who have knowledge and experience in or about your field, and (3) from **experiences** you have on your job.

You may not use all three sources at the same time. However, you will often find that a competency learned from one source may be improved by information from a different source. For example, you may read and understand about operating a cash register in several publications. This will give you knowledge and understanding. You may later observe another person operating a cash register. From this, you might learn some specific fact about a particular model. This would expand your general understanding of operating a cash register. Finally, you may be given the responsibility of operating the cash register on your job. By actually doing the work, you will apply what you have learned and learn even more. The more you work with the cash register, the more competent you will become. You will not have to think through each step as you gain more and more proficiency and experience. Cash register skills may be read about, but they cannot be completely mastered without an actual cash register to work on.

Instructional materials may come from different sources, just as they may be for different uses. These major types will be helpful to you in home furnishings marketing:

- Materials used in schools, especially those used in your marketing and distributive education class
- Store manuals and policy and procedure guides
- Operating manuals from equipment suppliers
- Product information brochures from manufacturers
- Catalogues
- Professional trade publications

- Labels, tags, warranties, and guarantees

Other sources may not contain as specific and useful information all the time. The information may be periodic or general, but it will be helpful. These sources include newspapers and magazines. Daily newspapers can be useful in many ways. You might look for advertisements from competitors and compare prices, merchandise features, and value. The information you gain could be quite helpful to you in sales presentations to your customers.

You may learn from people by watching and listening as they perform a task or as they give you instruction. You may observe what they do. You may ask questions. Think of other ways you can learn from different people.

The most obvious person from whom you learn is your instructor or teacher-coordinator. Others who will be helpful to you in home furnishings marketing include co-workers, supervisors, store managers, company representatives, and your customers.

Some of the many things you may learn include:

- How to promote good working relationships
- How to help develop pleasant working conditions
- How to be pleasant and friendly
- How to locate and use merchandise information
- How to make good use of experience
- How to be considerate of others
- How to solve problems related to the job
- How to follow store policies and procedures
- How to complete store records and forms
- How to arrange stock
- How to deal with difficult customers
- How to use customer information as a selling tool

This list could go on and on. The key to learning from other people is to be **alert** and **receptive.** For example, a customer may come to you and ask for single sheets for a waterbed. You may know that there are different sheets for waterbeds, but you may not be aware that waterbed sheets come in different sizes. As you question your customer about the size and as you search your stock, you will learn something new about your merchandise. Thus, you have learned by a customer request something you did not know about the merchandise you sell.

Watch and listen carefully. People offer you many combined years of successful experience from which you can draw valuable lessons.

The **daily experiences** you have on your job are extremely important. If you use your time wisely, you can be learning every minute you are at work. Each new thing you learn makes your job easier and may open up opportunities for promotion and advancement. Each time you repeat a task, such as refilling a stock shelf, you become more proficient, more competent, and you gain experience. Use every opportunity presented at work to learn. Talk with manufacturer's representatives if they visit your store or department. You may learn of a new design or a new use for some particular merchandise. Did you know, for instance, that bed sheets make attractive fabric-covered walls and add a definite decorative touch to a room?

You can even learn from your mistakes—another part of your experiences. If you fail to secure proper authorization for a credit purchase, for example, report it immediately to your supervisor. Learn what you should have done and learn how to correct your mistake. The next time you need to process a credit purchase, you will remember how to use proper procedures and avoid the mistake you made in the past. You will have benefited from a bad experience.

How does one develop and improve competencies to become successful? There is no one answer. Some qualities or abilities just seem to "come naturally." Other skills and abilities are learned in school; others on the job. One thing is certain: training, growth, education for success is a continuing process. You will develop your competencies from many sources. Make the most of every opportunity!

Questions

1. What are the three primary sources from which you may learn or acquire competencies?
2. What are the major types of instructional materials you may use?
3. How may you learn from other people?

4. Who are the people from whom you may learn about home furnishings marketing?
5. List at least eight things you have learned from other people.
6. Why are your daily job experiences so important?

Projects

1. Review the suggested list of instructional materials for home furnishings marketing. Indicate which are available in your marketing and distributive education classroom. Add other publications that are not on this list but that are available to you.
2. Secure a copy of the policies and procedures for your training station from your supervisor. Tell at least five specific points you can learn or have learned from this material.
3. Select one particular co-worker, and name at least five specific points you have learned from this person. Explain how you learned from the person.
4. Keep a log at work for two weeks. At the end of this time, report to the class what you have learned from your experiences. Be specific.

Suggested List of Instructional Materials for Home Furnishings Marketing

Advertising
American Enterprise Series (Financial Management, The Management Function, The Marketing Function, Merchandising and Buying, The Promotion Function, The Selling Function)
Advanced Marketing Curriculum
General Marketing Curriculum
Preparatory Marketing Curriculum
Basic Retail Credit
Physical Distribution
Fibers and Fabrics
Color Fundamentals of Marketing
Basic Visual Merchandising
General Merchandising
Practical Selling
Your Attitude is Showing
You're Hired: Getting the Right Job for You
YOU: A Guide to Personal Development for Young People

5

How Can I Organize My Learning Experience?

Objectives: *After completing this assignment, you will be able to—*

1. *identify three broad categories of competencies for development and use;*
2. *explain the importance of basic or general skills;*
3. *discuss how learning marketing skills information enhances application of the skills;*
4. *give sources from which to learn product information; and*
5. *explain how product information is used.*

Learning experiences can come from many sources, such as your school, your work, other people, printed materials, and professional organizations. To make the most of learning experiences and opportunities, identify the type of skills or competencies being developed or used. For convenience, group the skill areas into broad categories as follows:

1. Basic and social skills or general skills
2. Marketing skills
3. Product technology skills

The general or basic and social skills include abilities you can work on right now. You can improve and you can practice. Later, when you have the opportunity to learn more technical and advanced skills, you can concentrate on the new information.

Under general skills, first consider **communication skills**—speaking, listening, telephoning, and writing. These skills are important to any person in any occupation, but they are essential for a salesperson.

Speaking well is more than pronouncing words correctly and clearly. It also means selecting the right words for the person being addressed or for the product or service being described. When selling, you must use properly chosen words to convey ideas and product information.

Speaking also includes being well organized. Effective sales presentations should be orderly and thorough. Accuracy is important so that all claims made about a product or its benefits are true. Part of the positive image you project about yourself and your store is done by speaking.

Listening is one of the most important communication tools for a salesperson. The salesperson must listen and hear what a customer has to say. From the information gained by listening, the needs of the customer can be determined. Quite possibly, the customer may do most of the talking, at least at the beginning of a sale. Listen for details, for problems, for needs. Many experienced and successful salespeople have learned that a customer can actually **talk** him or herself into a sale if only the salesperson really knows how to listen well.

The telephone can be used effectively to bring customers to the store and to answer customer questions about merchandise. Using the telephone correctly involves both speaking and listening. Questions can be asked and answered that may be useful when the customer comes to the store. If the customer gives a name and indicates she or

he will be coming to the store, take notes and use the information when the customer appears. Be sure to give your name to the customer and suggest that he or she ask for you when they come to the store.

Writing skills are required for reports and for sales slips, as well as for notes you may keep on customers. Accuracy is essential. Again, your writing skills project an image of you and your store.

Another very important skill area is that of human relations. **Human relation skills** are essential in selling because it is a people-oriented business. These skills include being able to interact with other people, to be liked and accepted, to be tactful—in general, to get along with others.

Math skills are also included under basic skills. You can not always rely on a calculator or a computer to add, subtract, multiply, or perform other calculations for you. Math skills are so important that you may, in fact, be asked before you are hired to take a test that will include several math problems. You will not have a calculator or computer to help you. Remember, 70 percent accuracy isn't good enough when counting change or adding up a customer's purchases.

Other points included under basic or general skills or competencies are the development and demonstration of desirable qualities:

- Willingness to work and learn
- Being honest and trustworthy
- Being responsible
- Being cooperative
- Demonstrating leadership abilities
- Showing initiative and creativity
- Accepting and using criticism
- Using time wisely
- Being neat in appearance and work
- Demonstrating fairness and integrity

Marketing skills cover a broad range of activities. Remember the definition of marketing: "the total system of interrelated business activities that plan, promote, and distribute goods and services to the final consumer." Using this definition, you can begin to think of some of the many skills you will need for marketing.

Skills related to the area of **sales psychology** are vital. This covers two prime areas. First, sales psychology means determining and understanding the motivations of people—your customers. Having an insight into their motivations or drives means watching for their displays of different emotions and actions. Understanding why people do and don't do certain things can be very helpful to the salesperson. Second, sales psychology means developing the ability to aid people interacting with each other. This is what has been called "the art of dealing with people." Since sales is a people-oriented business, it is no surprise that interpersonal skills are very necessary. You will also use and develop good interpersonal or human relations skills in your associations with co-workers, supervisors, and managers. These skills are so important that they are included in basic as well as marketing skills.

Personal organization skills aid the salesperson in many ways. Organizing your personal time and activities, managing your work time, and managing your selling time will pay off. You will accomplish more and feel better about yourself. You will possibly find your income increasing with more sales or quicker promotions.

Professional selling skills are both learned and developed. The skills are discussed in detail in publications devoted exclusively to selling, such as Practical Selling, available from this same publisher.

Marketing skills are developed both in school and on the job. Generally, you will learn the information in school and then apply what you have learned at work. You can learn about different kinds of inventories, for example, while you are still in school. At work you will be better prepared to perform the activities associated with a physical inventory.

You will learn and understand economic concepts. This could include learning about such terms as balance sheet, profit and loss statement, depreciation, and return on investment. Developing this kind of knowledge can enable you to use the concepts better when you need to while at work. It prepares you to be a better employee or even to become your own boss—an entrepreneur!

New technology and advances in techniques and equipment will cause you to continue to learn. The impact of the computer has brought many changes to retailing. As you are learning about marketing functions, you will also learn how the computer is used in areas such as buying, receiving and checking, inventory, and credit. You will no doubt use a computer terminal rather than just a cash register if you are in a store with

modern equipment. Scanning devices or wands may be used to record the merchandise price automatically.

Product technology includes both **knowing** and **using** information about your merchandise. You may learn about different fabrics and fabric finishes, different sizes and designs, different names for colors, different names for items. Remember that using the product information with your customers is the reason you need to learn the information. How well you can tell customers about the merchandise, and how well you can answer their questions, may be the difference between making and not making a sale.

Product information can be learned from information supplied by the manufacturer, such as merchandise tags or brochures. Other salespeople may give you valuable information, as may the buyer or your supervisor. You may do some personal research in local libraries. However, never forget that while customers really do want to know about the merchandise, their greatest interest usually is in what the merchandise can do for them—the product's benefits. For example, you may explain the fabric finish, design, manufacturing technique, and care of a bedspread to a customer. At the same time, do not neglect to explain its wearability. Remember to use your basic skills. Listen to the customer, and use your product information to answer questions and concerns.

Some successful salespeople spend as much or more time learning about their merchandise as they do actually selling. In addition to being able to give customers product information, the knowledge will help you become a better salesperson. The more you know about your merchandise, the more confidence and enthusiasm you will have in selling it.

In relation to product or merchandise information, you should become familiar with the major brand names in your store or department. A brand name or trademark is used by manufacturers to identify products. A brand may be a word, mark, symbol, or combination of these. It may appear on the merchandise itself or on an attached tag or label. Some brands are national. That is, they are distributed and sold across the entire country. Some may be regional or private brands. Regional brands are sold only in specific areas of the country. Private brands are placed on merchandise produced for a special retail operation and not sold anywhere else.

As previously stated, some of the many skills required to enter and succeed in home furnishings marketing may be developed while still in high school. Others come with experience on the job. Training programs may be provided by your employer, or additional training may be offered by professional organizations. Salespeople in home furnishings can also keep current and learn new merchandise and other information by reading publications from manufacturers and professional trade publications.

You can begin now to assess your abilities and work on areas of weakness. Regardless of how much education you may plan to acquire after getting your high school diploma, you must have the basic skills. You **must** be able to read and write well, be able to communicate with people, and be able to use simple arithmetic functions with accuracy!

Questions

1. What are the three broad categories of competencies which are important to develop?
2. What skills are included under communication skills?
3. What can be learned from listening to the customer?
4. Why are human relations skills so important in retailing?
5. List at least three desirable qualities also included under basic or general skills.
6. What two prime areas are covered in sales psychology?
7. How are professional selling skills acquired?
8. What is included in product technology?
9. Give three sources from which you may gain product information.
10. In addition to product information, what is the greatest interest of customers?
11. What is a brand name?
12. After high school, how may you continue to learn?

Projects

1. Look for at least three national brand names carried by your employer, or by a store where you shop if you do not work. Watch several customers, and record

their purchases. After you complete your survey, what can you say about the brand name sales? Give some reasons to support your conclusions.

2. Make a color chart to show the following colors which may be found in home furnishings merchandise. Add other color names if you wish.

   Vanilla, smoke, sapphire, rose, blanc, indigo, lilac, falcon, tiger lily, sable, mimosa, salmon, peach, cerulean, malachite, champagne, paprika, cocoa, sage, slate, adobe, lemon, geranium, jade, platinum, silver, buttercup

3. Develop a glossary of terms you could use to describe various home furnishings merchandise. Include such terms as abrasion resistance, no-iron, absorbency, dimensional stability, herringbone, embroidery, valance, velour, down, Art Nouveau, priscillas, duvet. Let the list continue to grow as your product information increases. Be able to explain and properly use the terms.

6

How Can I Evaluate and Improve?

Objectives: *After completing this assignment, you will be able to—*

1. *understand the uses of different types of performance evaluations;*
2. *describe useful items to include on a self-evaluation;*
3. *tell how to use evaluation results as a basis for improvement; and*
4. *explain quantitative and qualitative evaluations.*

Successful salespeople are a blend of training and experience. They work independently, but they are a very important part of a company team. In order to be a valuable team member and to enjoy personal and financial rewards, they are always seeking ways to improve. Finding ways to do a better job requires evaluating performance. After evaluation, ways to improve are developed. Evaluations may be done by the individual and/or by the employer.

Self-evaluation

Self-evaluation may be difficult because many people have a hard time being objective about themselves and their performance. However, any good salesperson thinks of a review or evaluation of work done as a part of completing the task. Looking at what has been achieved and how much has been accomplished is the first step in finding ways to do better the next time.

Self-evaluation should be done regularly to be most useful. It may be done at the end of each day, at the end of each week, or at the end of any specific time period most convenient for the person involved. Time should be set aside in the schedule to devote to self-evaluation. This will help avoid the tendency to put it off or not do it at all. Unless the self-evaluation is done on a regular basis, there will be no meaningful standard for comparison.

Self-evaluations must be honest and serious. If the salesperson merely sits and daydreams about desired accomplishments, the time is wasted. Self-evaluations are not the place for excuses or alibis. The facts and actual performance must be noted. Only then can a person see what can be done to improve or achieve desired results.

Self-evaluation is very personal. Each person will have areas, activities, and projects to examine. Just how this is done is a matter of choice. Some people design a form for their own use. Other people take company or store forms and modify them. Still others simply make a list of pertinent questions and answer them. Whatever method selected, be sure to cover a definite period of time, to be honest and objective, and to be as complete as possible.

Some suggestions may be helpful for the beginning salesperson. Perhaps you may write your own questions based on these ideas:

1. **Cover everything you did.** For example: What did I get done? Did I do everything I meant to do? What did I neglect or forget? Why? How can I correct this?

2. **See if time and/or effort was wasted.** When did I waste time? What effort was not productive? Was it my fault? How can I do better?

3. **Examine technical skills and abilities.** Do I really know enough about my merchandise? Can I use the information with my customers? What more do I need to learn? How can I find the information I need? How can I use the product information better with my customers? Is my sales presentation as good as it should be? How can I improve it?

4. **Look at your efficiency and effectiveness.** What sales were made or lost? How much time was spent with each customer? How was time spent between customers? How can time be better spent between customers?

You will want to add other areas and other questions to your evaluation to make it personal and to be of the most benefit to you. You may consider these areas, which relate to **sales techniques:**

1. Do I approach the customer properly? Do I project a positive image? Am I nervous? Do I put the customer at ease?

2. Do my merchandise demonstrations help the customer make a buying decision? Do I cover all the benefits for the customer? Do I encourage the customer to talk? Do I really listen?

3. How do I handle objections from the customer?

4. What kind of attitude do I show the customer? How do I present the store and department to the customer?

As you can see quickly, self-evaluation is far more than looking at the number of sales made or lost or the dollar total of sales made. The information is important and helpful, but it is also information the store will use in evaluations. Self-evaluation should include those personal areas that only you will know and be able to look into objectively. Self-evaluation may also benefit the store or business, but no one gains more than the individual doing the evaluation.

Once the evaluation is completed, plan immediately to improve. Again, use your own technique to indicate areas for improvement. You may mark areas with a highlight pen, or you may make a list of items to improve—just be certain to use some means to show where you can improve. Then write down what action you can and will take. Plan your improvement, and allow time on your schedule for the improvement.

Improvement plans must obviously be matched to what needs improving. If you are not as well groomed as you feel you should be, plan time for a new hairstyle or time to get your clothes cleaned and pressed or altered to fit better—whatever is indicated. If your sales presentation is not as smooth as you would like it to be, plan time to rehearse more. If you need more product information, plan time to read the merchandise information and to ask questions of co-workers. Plan to take the corrective action related to your problem area.

Company or Store Evaluation

Every company or store is interested in measuring the performance of its sales force. Unless the salespeople are productive, the store will not make a profit. Unless the store makes a profit, it cannot stay in business. Unless the store stays in business, you will not have your present job.

Companies often use two kinds of evaluations—quantitative and qualitative. Quantitative measures, which are based on sales figures, reflect the amount of sales and the dollar volume for each salesperson. Qualitative measures reflect judgments of the salesperson's abilities and attitudes.

Quantitative evaluations are based entirely on facts and figures. From reports collected by the store, any salesperson's records can be analyzed. Some of the facts and figures examined include sales volume totals, sizes of individual sales, quotas met or unmet, and sales per day or week. Other factors may be considered, depending on the needs of the store.

Stores may establish a quota for each salesperson, whether pay is straight or on commission. This quota is the amount of sales the individual salesperson is expected to make during a given period of time. Quotas are generally set according to previous sales records for a store or department.

The factors used for qualitative evaluation are more difficult to identify than those for quantitative evaluation. Qualitative evaluations are done by sales managers or department supervisors who assess each salesperson's attitudes and abilities. Some stores may supply forms that list the attri-

butes considered important by that store or department. Other stores rely on the managers' and supervisors' skill in asking and answering questions about each salesperson. The questions might include some of the following:

1. Does the person stay up to date on new merchandise and department policies?
2. Does the person have ambition and initiative?
3. Does the person manage time and resources well?
4. Does the person keep all records and reports up to date and accurate?
5. Does the person have and use adequate merchandise information?
6. Does the person strive to improve? How?
7. Does the person make good use of suggestions?
8. Does the person follow management guidelines?

This list could be easily expanded. The questions are selected and answered by the person doing the evaluation. Reports are then written on each person evaluated. These reports can be helpful to the salesperson who is sincere about wanting to improve and advance. They are also beneficial to the company in many other ways. Promotion decisions could be swayed one way or the other. Department responsibilities could be reassigned. More department supervision might be needed. More store training may be called for.

Store or department evaluations are done to help both the salesperson and the store become as successful as possible. As you learned earlier, successful salespeople reflect training and experience plus a good mixture of desirable personal qualities. If something is missing, store evaluations may point out what this is. Then improvement can be planned.

Improvement Plans

Evaluations, done by the individual or by the store or department, are only half of the task. The other half is improving. There are as many ways to improve as there are points that need improvement. The individual has the primary responsibility for seeking ways to improve, although the store may offer suggestions and even provide certain training. Whether the improvement plans are provided by the store or developed by the individual, the individual's participation and willingness is the key factor in success.

Store Training

Many stores offer a period of training for newly hired salespeople. This training will likely include information about the company, its merchandise, and its policies. Sales training and detailed aspects of the specific job may be done in the department. Some training may be in a classroom setting, and other may be done in the department while on the job.

Departments may hold sales meetings. Suggestions for selling new merchandise may be provided. Salespeople may exchange ideas and useful tips. Updated information on store policies can be shared. Such meetings provide opportunity for two-way communication between the sales force and the supervisor and management.

Self-training

Salespeople who really want to improve recognize that there are always new things to be learned. Existing skills and abilities can be further refined. Education and training do not end when you have a job. The creative and ambitious salesperson develops and follows a continuing plan for self-improvement. As time passes, new activities are added to the plan.

Self-training may include formal courses. These may be offered by colleges and universities. Many professional organizations provide specialized short courses. Civic organizations sometimes sponsor short courses on public speaking, current events, or other topics of interest for self-improvement.

In addition to formal courses, individuals can learn and improve on their own. They can use public libraries as excellent sources of information. A salesperson having difficulty keeping necessary records, for instance, could find books to study to improve these skills.

Reading business and professional journals and trade publications related to home furnishings can provide new information. Exchanging ideas with co-workers often proves to be of benefit. Information could include ideas on how to sell the merchandise or tips for suggestion selling.

Questions

1. What are two ways evaluations may be done?
2. Why are self-evaluations sometimes difficult?
3. To be most useful, how should self-evaluations be done?
4. What part do excuses or alibis play in self-evaluations?
5. Give four helpful suggestions to use if you are developing your own questions for self-evaluation.
6. In addition to sales and dollar volumes, what other information should be included on self-evaluations?
7. What should you do when you complete your self-evaluation?
8. How do you know what to improve?
9. What are the two kinds of evaluations a store or department may use? Define each.
10. Who benefits from store or department evaluations?

Project

Design a self-evaluation plan you will use. After completing it, present your plan for improvement.

7

Career Qualifications, Plans, and Opportunities

Objectives: *After completing this assignment, you will be able to—*

1. *identify qualifications for home furnishings marketing;*
2. *tell what may be learned from your school records;*
3. *list three points to ensure your successful career; and*
4. *name at least three ways to learn of job opportunities in home furnishings marketing.*

The qualifications for a successful career in home furnishings marketing may vary, depending on the size and location of the business. Even with variations in merchandise, services, and individual approaches to the business, the main qualifications may be grouped into three broad categories: (1) education, (2) experience, and (3) personal characteristics.

You will be expected to prove your abilities (your competencies) and to work your way to more advanced and rewarding positions. Regardless of how outstanding your record and potential may be, you will most likely start in an entry-level position. As you progress, you will have to make the opportunities to expand your qualifications and abilities.

Education

Your school records tell an employer several things about you. Some of the things that may be reflected in your school records include the following:

- How well you apply yourself
- Your interests
- Your attendance and dependability
- Your participation and involvement
- Your leadership abilities and potential
- Your knowledge in subject matter

You can see quickly that it is to your advantage to have the best possible record in school. Your teachers and your employers, if you are working while still in school, will add their impressions and observations to the other records kept by the school.

Your school records will also have an effect on your future educational activities. You may earn scholarships or awards to assist you in going on for more training after high school. Your grades must be acceptable for admission to college, if you intend to enroll in a postsecondary institution. Many companies will also review your grades before deciding to place you in company training programs. You will not have a second chance to make a good impression with your high school records. Make your time count now for your future!

Experience

Even though you may have limited work experience, any job experience can be valuable. Job experiences can demonstrate your abilities as well as your initiative and motivation. Approach any job as a step toward a better future. Always do your best at any job. There is no such thing as an unimportant job when you are earnestly working to build a

secure and successful future. Keep good records of your employment. You will need the employment dates, supervisor's name, and company name and address for use on applications and references in the future. One note of caution: Never use a person for a reference without receiving his or her permission!

Personal Characteristics

You know that human relations skills are essential in home furnishings marketing because it is a people-oriented business. Some of the most important personal characteristics are:

- Willingness to work
- Willingness to learn
- Honesty and integrity
- Cooperation
- Leadership
- Initiative and creativity
- Dependability
- Motivation
- Personal organization

You have learned how to evaluate your personal characteristics and plan to develop the qualifications you lack or need to improve. You and only you can develop and demonstrate these and other desirable personal characteristics. No one else can do it for you. You can and do show your personal characteristics in your everyday activities. Education and experience can be gained as you move along in your career if you have the proper personal characteristics.

Career Opportunities

No matter the state of the economy, qualified people are always needed in retailing. In fact, there is usually a shortage of **qualified** people for the available job openings. This does not mean that success and high levels of compensation will come automatically to those who are qualified. You must work and earn your way. To ensure your career and your success you should (1) have a career plan, (2) know how to locate suitable sales positions, and (3) apply your talents toward advancement.

The numbers and types of positions available largely depend on a store's size and organization. Large stores may have merchandise managers, buyers, stock supervisors, receiving supervisors, for example, in each store in their chain, or they may have these positions at a division level covering several stores in the same geographic area. A small store may have salespeople who assist in all of the merchandising functions. The "specialist" positions are generally found in large store operations.

To plan career goals, you must first consider the requirements of a particular job and your own strengths and preferences. The particular career path you might take will often be dictated by the nature of the organization for which you work. Many large store operations have excellent executive training programs. Qualified people who demonstrate ability and desire may move up through the ranks from entry-level jobs to executive positions by becoming a part of these programs.

The potential for growth and more rapid advancement is usually greater within a larger organization. Small stores, however, often allow a young person to take on additional responsibilities and to see the overall merchandising picture because the jobs are less specialized and less clearly defined. Fewer "specialists" are available for specific functions.

Your choice of a particular career plan must also take into consideration options available to you within your community or your willingness to move where other options may be. Some positions may require travel. Such positions might include buyer or regional merchandise manager. Are you willing to move or to travel? You must be if it is a requirement for a promotion you seek.

As you develop your career plan, remember it is just a plan—not a hard and fast rule to which you must stick, no matter what. Since you design the plan, you can change it as your interests or abilities take new directions.

When setting career goals, a critical factor to remember is that there may be many ways in which to reach any goal. If one plan doesn't work out, seek another way to accomplish the same objective. You can reach the goal if you want it badly enough and are willing to work. Learn the requirements for each position you consider. Honestly determine if you have the qualities or can develop the qualities necessary for success in that position. Be certain that your goals are realistic and are what you really want.

The following concepts and techniques will prove helpful to you.

1. Recognize that you can be in control of your own career development. Accept this both as a responsibility and an opportunity.

2. Explore jobs thoroughly, inventory the skills required, and compare these to your skills and experience.

3. List your expectations for your career. Put your expectations in order of priority.

4. Make and use your personal evaluation and improvement plan.

5. Examine the risks involved with career moves and the risks you are willing to take.

6. Investigate alternative goals for the amount of education and experience you ha[illegible]

7. Remember that your attitude is important in your career planning.

There is really not a "typical" career path for you to use as a model. You most likely can expect to remain in a sales position until you are well acquainted with your store, its merchandise and services, and selling techniques. When you demonstrate success in this position, you will then be ready for the next move. You may even decide to stay in this position, especially if you are provided with a commission sales plan and your sales volume is high.

You may discover that your interests and abilities will lead you into a management position. You may find that merchandise functions and activities are more attractive to you. The choice and opportunity are yours.

Job titles and positions are numerous in the area of home furnishings marketing, but each one may not be available in every business operation. Examples include:

- Salesperson
- Stockperson and stock supervisor
- Display specialist
- Credit interviewer or manager
- Buyer
- Warehouse manager
- Department or store manager
- Customer service representative or manager
- Advertising and promotion manager
- Merchandise manager
- Cashier
- Assistant or associate buyer
- Computer specialists for merchandising tasks such as sales analysis
- Mid-management or supervisory positions
- District or area manager
- Marketing director
- Corporate executive
- Catalogue salesperson or manager
- Market research and survey
- Training department manager or training director

Whatever career plan you develop, you will find that the salesperson of today and of the future is more knowledgeable and better trained than any previously known. The people in retailing are accepted, recognized, and respected as professionals. There will continue to be salespeople in the future as long as there is a free enterprise system and a free market economy. Technology will not replace salespeople; it will change their jobs and create new ones.

Your career plan will cover your entire working life. Just as you must learn to be patient with your customers, you must be even more patient with your own career. You do not move from salesperson to corporate executive in a few months or years. It is important for you to establish your career path goals and begin to work toward them. You can drift aimlessly from job to job, but you will find more satisfaction and success if you have goals in mind and work to achieve each one.

There are many ways people learn of job openings and opportunities in home furnishings marketing. Some of the most common are (1) newspaper advertisements of positions and/or advertisements in trade publications, (2) employment agency listings, and (3) school placement officer.

In addition to these sources, friends may sometimes know of openings within their stores. You may even consider contacting stores you know or read about who have merchandise or reputations that appeal to you.

Do not take your first job in home furnishings marketing lightly. It will become the cornerstone for your entire future. You can expect many rewards from a career in this area. Financial and personal rewards are the most obvious, but there are others. You will have freedom to be creative and innovative, as well as freedom to select your hours and schedules at times. You may have the opportunity for extensive travel. You will have the chance to meet people with different backgrounds and interests. All in all, you

will have the chance for a very exciting career if you are willing to work hard. Good luck!

Questions

1. What are the three broad categories of qualifications needed by home furnishings employees?
2. List some points that may be learned about you from your school records.
3. Why should you keep records of any employment?
4. List at least five of the most important personal characteristics for people in home furnishings marketing.
5. Give three or more techniques that will be helpful to you in your career plan development.
6. What are the three most common sources to learn of job openings?

Project

Develop your career plan. List the goals and objectives you will need to reach your final plan. List your present skills and abilities and experience, and show your improvement plan to acquire the competencies needed for your career goals.

8

Do You Want to Be an Entrepreneur?

Objectives: *After completing this assignment, you will be able to—*

1. *state the most common reasons for business failures;*
2. *list important competencies for becoming a successful entrepreneur;*
3. *name the two major types of business loans; and*
4. *discuss factors to be considered in locating a new business.*

Do you want to be the decision-maker in your own home furnishings business? Do you want to have complete control of that business? Are you aware of the hazards and risks involved? Do you have the expertise and financial backing required for success? If your answers are yes, you may want to investigate becoming an entrepreneur—a person who organizes, manages, and assumes the risks for a business.

Many factors have to be considered and provided for before this idea can become a reality for you. And, remember, becoming an entrepreneur does not necessarily ensure that you will become a **successful** entrepreneur! Becoming an entrepreneur is a dream that many, many people strive to achieve each year. Before you settle back merely to dream, wake up to some very harsh facts. According to Dun & Bradstreet, about 10 to 20 percent of all new retail businesses fail within the first year. During the first five years, 30 to 40 percent of new businesses fail! The most common reasons for these business failures are inadequate preparation, undercapitalization, and managerial inexperience. These facts certainly tell you to proceed with caution.

Other reasons contribute to the high failure rate. These reasons include general economy recessions, too many retailers of the same type in the same general trade area, poor location selection, intense competition, and premature expansion. According to J. K. Lasser in his book, How to Run a Small Business, the biggest cause of failure is bad management. The entrepreneur was not prepared and skilled in business operation. Since the skills and knowledge of the owner are so critical, let's see just what a person needs to know to avoid failing as an entrepreneur.

First, you must have good physical and mental health. The hours are long and the work is difficult. As an entrepreneur, you will work longer and harder than at any other position in your career. Spending 60 to 70 hours a week in the beginning of a business is about average. Are you willing and able to commit this much time and energy to being your own boss?

Second, you must have the desire to succeed and the will to do whatever it takes to see your business run smoothly and profitably. Do you have the self-discipline required? Are you willing to make sacrifices? You might well find yourself in your home furnishings store taking inventory while your friends are enjoying a day off at the lake.

Third, you definitely need organizational and leadership skills. You must be able to

determine what needs to be done, organize the tasks in an efficient manner, and assign the work. Many times you may find that the work is assigned to you. You will need (and hire) competent employees, but you must be the leader. You are the one in control, the one responsible. You are the one who will be there long before and after the store is open for customers.

Finally, you will need expertise in home furnishings. All the product knowledge you have acquired will be helpful, but there are other areas of operating a home furnishings store where you will need expert advise and guidance. You will need specialized help from a lawyer, a banker, an accountant, an advertising agency, an insurance agent, and local, state, and federal government agencies. Their combined guidance is essential, but you are the one who must know home furnishings.

If all of these challenges are interesting to you and if you are willing to learn and work to succeed, begin to develop your business plan.

Financial resources can be a major problem. You must have enough capital (money) or be able to borrow enough to supplement what you have to buy the things needed to start your business. You will also need to provide enough money to operate the business until it begins to make a profit or at least begins to break even. You will need money to buy or lease a business location, purchase merchandise to stock, cover opening advertising costs, and pay for insurance and any licenses needed. You must also be able to pay for the services you need for the other experts. You must plan for operating expenses—utilities, wages, insurance, and so on. Another important thing to remember is planning for emergencies that may arise. Consider if you are going to extend credit to your customers. If you are, plan for this. All of this financial planning is a part of recognizing the risks involved.

How do you secure money to meet all these requirements? Sometimes the money may come from savings or from other investments the entrepreneur may have. Rarely is there enough money to cover all of the expenses. It becomes necessary to take loans.

There are two major types of business loans and several sources for them. First is a conventional business loan that is gotten through a bank, savings and loan, or other financial institution. This type of loan is called a secured loan because you give the institution making the loan the right to some property you hold. The institution may take possession of the property and sell it if you do not repay the loan according to the terms. Sometimes you may use a cosigner or comaker to secure a loan. The comaker agrees to guarantee your loan and to make the payment if you can or do not.

The second major type of loan is known as an unsecured loan. The loans are granted just on your promise to repay the money loaned to you. No property is pledged and no comakers are used. These loans are generally made by friends or relatives who know and believe in your honesty and abilities.

Still another source of financial resources may come from an active or silent partner. You may find a person who has money to invest and who is willing to let the money be used for your business. In return for the money invested, the person gets a share or percentage of ownership in the business.

The Small Business Administration makes loans to qualified entrepreneurs, as well as providing guidance and information to make the business run more successfully. They do not ensure success—they provide assistance.

Whatever your financial sources, you will need to be able to show exactly how much money you need and how you plan to spend the money. You will also have to show a plan to repay the money. You must project, or anticipate, your business profit. This projection or anticipation must be more than wishful thinking. You must back it up with realistic facts and figures.

Once you have adequate financial backing, you need to find a location for your business. You must remember that the location can have a great deal to do with success or failure. Is there another or similar business nearby? Is the location in a heavy traffic area? Is there plenty of parking? What is the condition of the buildings around you? What is the cost of the location? How does one location compare to other possibilities? Are you better off to buy, build, or lease? How much will you have to spend to remodel the present facility? How have businesses done in the past in the same location? What statistics are available to

help you make a decision? There are many questions to ask, and answer, before you select your location.

You must formulate your own business policies. This means you as the decision-maker must make choices. Will you offer customer credit plans? If so, what kinds? What kind of employees will you hire and how many? What fringe benefits will you provide? What hours will your store be open? You will be responsible for setting up all of the operational policies and procedures. Write them down to avoid confusion. You must also be certain that you are abiding by any governmental regulations that apply to your business—local, state, and federal.

In addition to operating policies, you will need to set your merchandising policies. You will decide and select your merchandising mix, prices, promotion plans, and other factors involved. How much merchandise do you intend to carry? What backup stock will be needed? Who will do the buying? Will you take any merchandise on consignment? The decisions on what is right for your store will be made by you—you are the one in charge.

Once you have everything ready to open your home furnishings business, you will have to plan to attract and keep customers. Remember that the customer is the most important person to any business. Unless customers come to the store and buy the merchandise, the business will be forced to close. How will you plan to attract and keep customers?

With all of these responsibilities on your shoulders, you can see clearly how many different skills and abilities are needed to be successful. Can you remember to get all the proper licenses, pay the taxes, plan a credit policy, and decide on hours of operation all at the same time? Are you flexible?

Compare the advantages and the disadvantages. Being a successful entrepreneur can mean more freedom and a greater chance to make more money. It can also mean less financial security and longer hours. While it is true that 30 to 40 percent of new businesses fail within the first five years, it is just as true that 60 to 70 percent of these new businesses are successful. The opportunity and the choice are yours.

Questions

1. What are the most common reasons for business failures?
2. According to at least one expert, what is the biggest cause of failure?
3. What are the competencies or qualities required to be a successful entrepreneur?
4. Who are some specialists from whom you may get help?
5. What are the two major types of business loans?
6. In addition to financial backing, what are other considerations before opening your business?

HOME FURNISHINGS MARKETING

Answer Book

A Guide for

Home Furnishings Marketing

(Softlines)

Answer Book

By

Jo Ann Reeves

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Contents

Foreword / v

Preface / vi

Acknowledgments / vii

Assignment 1: What Is Home Furnishings Merchandising? / 1

Assignment 2: Beginning Duties and Responsibilities / 3

Assignment 3: What Do I Need to Know? / 5

Assignment 4: How Can Competencies Be Acquired? / 6

Assignment 5: How Can I Organize My Learning Experiences? / 8

Assignment 6: How Can I Evaluate and Improve? / 10

Assignment 7: Career Qualifications, Plans, and Opportunities / 12

Assignment 8: Do You Want to Be an Entrepreneur? / 14

COMPLIANCE STATEMENT

TITLE VI, CIVIL RIGHTS ACT OF 1964; THE MODIFIED COURT ORDER, CIVIL ACTION 5281, FEDERAL DISTRICT COURT, EASTERN DISTRICT OF TEXAS, TYLER DIVISION

Reviews of local education agencies pertaining to compliance with Title VI Civil Rights Act of 1964 and with specific requirements of the Modified Court Order, Civil Action No. 5281, Federal District Court, Eastern District of Texas, Tyler Division are conducted periodically by staff representatives of the Texas Education Agency. These reviews cover at least the following policies and practices:

(1) acceptance policies on student transfers from other school districts;

(2) operation of school bus routes or runs on a non-segregated basis;

(3) nondiscrimination in extracurricular activities and the use of school facilities;

(4) nondiscriminatory practices in the hiring, assigning, promoting, paying, demoting, reassigning, or dismissing of faculty and staff members who work with children;

(5) enrollment and assignment of students without discrimination on the basis of race, color, or national origin;

(6) nondiscriminatory practices relating to the use of a student's first language; and

(7) evidence of published procedures for hearing complaints and grievances.

In addition to conducting reviews, the Texas Education Agency staff representatives check complaints of discrimination made by a citizen or citizens residing in a school district where it is alleged discriminatory practices have occurred or are occurring.

Where a violation of Title VI of the Civil Rights Act is found, the findings are reported to the Office for Civil Rights, Department of Health, Education and Welfare.

If there is a direct violation of the Court Order in Civil Action No. 5281 that cannot be cleared through negotiation, the sanctions required by the Court Order are applied.

TITLE VII, CIVIL RIGHTS ACT OF 1964: EXECUTIVE ORDERS 11246 and 11375; TITLE IX 1973 EDUCATION AMENDMENTS; REHABILITATION ACT OF 1973 AS AMENDED; 1974 AMENDMENTS TO THE WAGE-HOUR LAW EXPANDING THE AGE DISCRIMINATION IN EMPLOYMENT ACT OF 1967; VIETNAM ERA VETERANS READJUSTMENT ASSISTANCE ACT OF 1972 AS AMENDED IN 1974.

It is the policy of the Texas Education Agency to comply fully with the nondiscrimination provisions of all federal and state laws and regulation by assuring that no person shall be excluded from consideration for recruitment, selection, appointment, training, promotion, retention, or any other personnel action, or be denied any benefits or participation in any programs of activities which it operates on the grounds of race, religion, color, national origin, sex, handicap, age, or veteran status (except where age, sex, or handicap constitute a bona fide occupational qualification necessary to proper and efficient administration). The Texas Education Agency makes positive efforts to employ and advance in employment all protected groups.

Foreword

This publication is one of a series of self-contained instructional materials for students in marketing and distribution. Although the material is designed for individualized study, it should be used under the supervision of an instructor. For that reason, two publications are offered, the student's manual and an answer book.

The student's manual is for the use of persons in training. Each assignment includes competencies, appropriate information, objectives to be met, and questions and projects that help in meeting those objectives. The answer book provides competencies as well, and the answers to the questions.

Every effort has been made to produce a publication that addresses the unique needs of our current student population. Students with limited English proficiency (LEP) as well as handicapped, educationally disadvantaged, and nontraditional students may require modification of the material in this publication. The professional staff of EIMC will gladly work with any instructor having these students to show how the instructional material can be adapted for specific individualized instruction. Consult local, state, and federal agencies that offer assistance and guidance and that can provide sound recommendations for productive classroom management.

Kathryn R. Allen, Ph.D.
Acting Director, Extension Instruction
and Materials Center

Preface

This is one of a series of marketing publications with a new format. It is not intended to provide comprehensive information on the marketing of softline home furnishings, but to serve as a guide for the student who is entering this occupational area. Using this guide, the student will be able to develop an in-depth plan for making a successful career in this area.

The area of softline home furnishings marketing is so diverse that it would not be possible to cover all of the product information. Sources are given for the student so that he or she may develop the necessary knowledge in the field.

The instructor will find this guide useful in preparing training plans, individualized instruction, and a teaching outline for specialized instruction.

Acknowledgments

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Gratitude is also extended to the marketing and distributive education staff of the Texas Education Agency for providing guidance during the development of this publication.

Assignment 1

What Is Home Furnishings Merchandising?

Questions

1. Give two definitions of **marketing.**

   (1) The American Marketing Association definition is "the performance of business activities that direct the flow of goods and services from producer to consumer."
   (2) Marketing is a total system of interrelated business activities that plan, price, promote, and distribute goods and services to the final consumer.

2. What is the most widely used definition of **merchandising**?

   Merchandising is a combination of strategies for having the right product or service at the right place, at the right time, in the right quantities or assortments, in the right light, and at the right price.

3. Give a simpler definition of **merchandising.**

   Merchandising is showcasing a product or service so that it is always attractive to the prospective buyer.

4. What are some of the items that may be included in the broad area of home furnishings?

   Home furnishings may include household furniture, carpets, draperies and blinds, kitchen appliances, decorative accessories, lamps and shades, beddings, and linens.

5. What three categories are used to limit your study of home furnishings in this publication?

   (1) Beddings and linens
   (2) Ready-made drapes and window coverings
   (3) Miscellaneous accessories

6. How is variety shown in home furnishings?

   Variety is shown in the many different items, styles, colors, fabrics, finishes, designs, price lines, and sizes.

7. Where may home furnishings be sold?

   Home furnishings may be sold in department stores, discount stores, and specialty shops.

8. How may the shops and stores that sell home furnishings differ from one another?

   They may be different in location, size, ownership, available services, and hours of operation.

Projects

1. If you are now employed in home furnishings merchandising, write a description of your shop or store. Be as specific as you can. Include such things as location, lines of merchandise, shop or department arrangement, special items carried, price variations, and hours of operation. Do not limit your description to these things if you can add others.

2. If you are not employed, describe the location where you purchased a home furnishings item recently. Revisit the shop or store, if necessary, to observe it more closely. Give as much detail description as you can.

3. Create a collage (group of pictures) to illustrate the variety of merchandise available at your store.

Assignment 2

Beginning Duties and Responsibilities

Questions

1. Why is the customer the most important person to any retail operation?

   If the customer does not come to the store and buy the merchandise, the store will close.

2. What are five qualities customers appreciate and recognize easily in a salesperson?

   (1) a neat appearance
   (2) courtesy
   (3) consideration
   (4) interest
   (5) enthusiasm

3. Describe at least five duties expected of a beginning salesperson.

   (Use any five described in this assignment.)

4. Why is incoming merchandise checked?

   Incoming merchandise must be checked for breakage, damage, shortage, overage, and substitutions.

5. How may the size of the store affect the tasks expected of a salesperson?

   In a small store with few employees, the salesperson may perform some tasks that might be assigned to others in a larger operation.

6. What is forward and reserve stock?

   Forward stock is the merchandise placed in the selling area. Reserve stock is put in a storeroom.

7. What is a physical inventory, and why is it important?

   A physical inventory is counting all of the items in the store. The information is helpful in determining what styles, colors, and lines of merchandise sell most often.

8. What are three kinds of shoplifters you should watch out for?

   (1) professional thieves
   (2) impulsive people who see a chance to steal
   (3) young people

9. What is the single characteristic most important for a salesperson?

   a positive attitude

Projects

1. Read carefully each of the twenty activities that may be expected of a beginning salesperson in home furnishings. Tell if each one is expected of you where you are employed, and give a reason for each statement as it relates to you. If you are not employed, tell why you would expect to have each assigned to you and why.

2. Investigate the security practices, policies, and equipment used where you work. Explain each, and tell what responsibilities you have for security. If you are not working, tell about security measures used at a store where you shop.

Assignment 3

What Do I Need to Know?

Questions

1. What are "competencies"?

   To be successful in any job, you must develop knowledge, skills, abilities, and attitudes. These are called competencies.

2. What are four uses for a competency list?

   (1) as a progress chart
   (2) as a planning tool
   (3) to help gain employment
   (4) to help gain promotions

3. Name the instructional areas or categories for competency groupings.

   The categories are basic/social skills, computer literacy and applications, credit, distribution process and systems, economic concepts/principles, inventory control system, management principles and practices, operations, product and service merchandising, and promotion.

Assignment 4

How Can Competencies Be Acquired?

Questions

1. What are the three primary sources from which you may learn or acquire competencies?

   (1) reading and studying materials designed to assist you in your career
   (2) other people who have knowledge and experience in or about your field
   (3) experiences you have on your job

2. What are the major types of instructional materials you may use?

   materials from your classrooms; store manuals and policy and procedure guides; operating manuals from equipment suppliers; product information brochures from manufacturers; catalogues; professional trade publications; and labels, tags, warranties, and guarantees

3. How may you learn from other people?

   You may learn by watching, listening, observing, and asking questions. (Students may also add other ways they learn from other people.)

4. Who are the people from whom you may learn about home furnishings marketing?

   You may learn from your instructor or teacher-coordinator, co-workers, supervisors, store managers, company representatives, and customers.

5. List at least eight things you have learned from other people.

   (The student may select from the list of possibilities in this assignment or may give personal and specific items.)

6. Why are your daily job experiences so important?

   You can be learning every minute you are at work. Each new thing you learn makes your job easier and may open up opportunities for promotion and advancement.

Projects

1. Review the suggested list of instructional materials for home furnishings marketing. Indicate which are available in your marketing and distributive education classroom. Add other publications that are not on this list but that are available to you.

2. Secure a copy of the policies and procedures for your training station from your supervisor. Tell at least five specific points you can learn or have learned from this material.

3. Select one particular co-worker, and name at least five specific points you have learned from this person. Explain how you learned from the person.

4. Keep a log at work for two weeks. At the end of this time, report to the class what you have learned from your experiences. Be specific.

Suggested List of Instructional Materials for Home Furnishings Marketing

Advertising
American Enterprise Series (Financial Management, The Management Function, The Marketing Function, Merchandising and Buying, The Promotion Function, The Selling Function)
Advanced Marketing Curriculum
General Marketing Curriculum
Preparatory Marketing Curriculum
Basic Retail Credit
Physical Distribution
Fibers and Fabrics
Color Fundamentals of Marketing
Basic Visual Merchandising
General Merchandising
Practical Selling
Your Attitude Is Showing
You're Hired: Getting the Right Job for You
YOU: A Guide to Personal Development for Young People

Assignment 5

How Can I Organize My Learning Experiences?

Questions

1. What are the three broad categories of competencies which are important to develop?

   (1) basic and social skills or general skills
   (2) marketing skills
   (3) product technology skills

2. What skills are included under communication skills?

   speaking, listening, telephoning, and writing

3. What can be learned from listening to the customer?

   By listening, the needs of the customer can be determined.

4. Why are human relations skills so important in retailing?

   Human relations skills are essential because retailing or selling is a people-oriented business.

5. List at least three desirable qualities also included under basic or general skills.

   Any three of these: willingness to work and learn, being honest and trustworthy, being responsible, being cooperative, demonstrating leadership abilities, showing initiative and creativity, accepting and using criticism, using time wisely, being neat in appearance and work, demonstrating fairness and integrity

6. What two prime areas are covered in sales psychology?

   (1) Sales psychology means determining and understanding the motivations of people—your customers.
   (2) Sales psychology means developing the ability to aid people interacting with each other.

7. How are professional selling skills acquired?

   They are both learned and developed.

8. What is included in product technology?

   knowing and **using** information about your merchandise

9. Give three sources from which you may gain product information.

   (1) from information supplied by the manufacturer
   (2) from other salespeople, the buyer, or your supervisor
   (3) from personal research in local libraries

10. In addition to product information, what is the greatest interest of customers?

    Customers' greatest interest usually is in what the merchandise can do for them—the product's benefits.

11. What is a brand name?

    A brand name or trademark is used by manufacturers to identify products. It may be a word, mark, symbol, or combination of these.

12. After high school, how may you continue to learn?

    You may gain experience on the job. Training programs may be provided by your employer or by professional organizations. You can read publications from manufacturers and professional trade publications.

Projects

1. Look for at least three national brand names carried by your employer, or by a store where you shop if you do not work. Watch several customers, and record their purchases. After you complete your survey, what can you say about the brand name sales? Give some reasons to support your conclusions.

2. Make a color chart to show the following colors which may be found in home furnishings merchandise. Add other color names if you wish.

   Vanilla, smoke, sapphire, rose, blanc, indigo, lilac, falcon, tiger lily, sable, mimosa, salmon, peach, cerulean, malachite, champagne, paprika, cocoa, sage, slate, adobe, lemon, geranium, jade, platinum, silver, buttercup

3. Develop a glossary of terms you could use to describe various home furnishings merchandise. Include such terms as abrasion resistance, no-iron, absorbency, dimensional stability, herringbone, embroidery, valance, velour, down, Art Nouveau, priscillas, duvet. Let the list continue to grow as your product information increases. Be able to explain and properly use the terms.

Assignment 6

How Can I Evaluate and Improve?

Questions

1. What are two ways evaluations may be done?

   (1) by the individual
   (2) by the store or department

2. Why are self-evaluations sometimes difficult?

   Many people have a hard time trying to be objective about themselves and their performance.

3. To be most useful, how should self-evaluations be done?

   They should be done on a regular basis. It may be at the end of any specific time period.

4. What part do excuses or alibis play in self-evaluations?

   There is no place for excuses or alibis in self-evaluations.

5. Give four helpful suggestions to use if you are developing your own questions for self-evaluation.

   (1) Cover everything you did.
   (2) See if time and/or effort was wasted.
   (3) Examine technical skills and abilities.
   (4) Look at your efficiency and effectiveness.

6. In addition to sales and dollar volumes, what other information should be included on self-evaluations?

   Personal areas that only you will know and be able to look into objectively should be included.

7. What should you do when you complete your self-evaluation?

   Plan immediately to improve.

8. How do you know what to improve?

   Improvement plans must be matched to areas needing improvement. Plan to take the corrective action related to the problem area.

9. What are the two kinds of evaluations a store or department may use? Define each.

   (1) Quantitative measures are based on sales figures.
   (2) Qualitative measures reflect judgments of the salesperson's abilities and attitudes.

10. Who benefits from store or department evaluations?

    Both the salesperson and the store benefit.

Project

Design a self-evaluation plan you will use. After completing it, present your plan for improvement.

Assignment 7

Career Qualifications, Plans, and Opportunities

Questions

1. What are the three broad categories of qualifications needed by home furnishings employees?

   (1) education
   (2) experience
   (3) personal characteristics

2. List some points that may be learned about you from your school records.

   (1) how well you apply yourself
   (2) your interests
   (3) your attendance and dependability
   (4) your participation and involvement
   (5) your leadership abilities and potential
   (6) your knowledge in subject matter

3. Why should you keep records of any employment?

   Employment dates, supervisor's names, company name and address may be needed for applications and references in the future.

4. List at least five of the most important personal characteristics for people in home furnishings marketing.

   Any five of these: willingness to work, willingness to learn, honesty and integrity, cooperation, leadership, initiative and creativity, dependability, motivation, and personal organization.

5. Give three or more techniques that will be helpful to you in your career plan development.

   (Any three of the following are acceptable.)
   (1) Recognize that you can be in control of your own career development.
   (2) Explore jobs thoroughly, inventory the skills required, and compare these to your skills and experience.
   (3) List your expectations for your career. Put your expectations in order of priority.
   (4) Make and use your personal evaluation and improvement plan.
   (5) Examine the risks involved with career moves and the risks you are willing to take.
   (6) Investigate alternative goals for the amount of education and experience you have.
   (7) Remember that your attitude is important in your career planning.

6. What are the three most common sources to learn of job openings?

(1) newspaper advertisements and/or advertisements in trade publications
(2) employment agency listings
(3) school placement offices

Project

Develop your career plan. List the goals and objectives you will need to reach your final plan. List your present skills and abilities and experience, and show your improvement plan to acquire the competencies needed for your career goals.

Assignment 8

Do You Want to Be an Entrepreneur?

Questions

1. What are the most common reasons for business failures?

   The most common reasons are inadequate preparation, undercapitalization, and managerial inexperience.

2. According to at least one expert, what is the biggest cause of failure?

   According to J. K. Lasser, the biggest cause of failure is bad management.

3. What are the competencies or qualities required to be a successful entrepreneur?

   (1) good physical and mental health
   (2) the desire to succeed and the will to do whatever it takes
   (3) organizational and leadership skills
   (4) expertise in home furnishings

4. Who are some specialists from whom you may get help?

   You will need a lawyer, a banker, an accountant, an advertising agency, an insurance agent, and local, state and federal government agencies.

5. What are the two major types of business loans?

   (1) a conventional business loan
   (2) an unsecured loan

6. In addition to financial backing, what are other considerations before opening your business?

   location, business policies, merchandising policies, and a plan to attract and keep customers